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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: JUDGE BRUGUIERE DISCUSSES ONGOING TERRORISM CHALLENGES

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Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REAS
ONS 1.4 B/D

1. (S) Summary: During a January 24 lunch hosted by the Ambassador, top terrorism investigating judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere discussed a number of ongoing investigations he was leading and also commented on a variety of terrorism-related issues. He believed that 2005 would be a dangerous year, given the expertise demonstrated during terrorist attacks in 2004, and thought in particular that Europe and Asia would be targeted. End summary.

2. (SBU) Bruguiere heads the Paris-based section of investigating judges that focus on terrorism issues. He and fellow investigating judge Jean-Francois Ricard concentrate on international and Islamic terrorism, while the other investigating judges examine Basque, Corsican and Breton-related terrorism. Bruguiere is by far the most visible and media-savvy of the terrorism investigating judges. Just in the past month, he has been the subject of extensive profiles in Le Monde, a French center-left daily newspaper, and the Financial Times.

INTERNATIONAL THREATS

3. (S) Bruguiere said he believed both Europe and Asia were front-line targets for terrorism in 2005. One essential problem with the European Union response, said Bruguiere, was that different countries had different institutional approaches to dealing with terrorist threats, despite the fact that many EU states had open borders via the Schengen agreement. He cited Germany and the Netherlands as two countries whose legal and administrative institutions made them difficult partners, despite their political will. Bruguiere speculated that those countries with direct experience of terrorism, such as the U.S., Spain, France and the U.K., had more fully developed their counter-terrorism capabilities. Potential terrorists knew which countries offered comparatively greater protections, and they took advantage of these opportunities within the EU, said Bruguiere.

4. (S) Al-Qaida-linked terrorists demonstrated their ability to strike within Europe not only during the Madrid bombings, but also during the 2004 Istanbul bombings, said Bruguiere. He noted that British financial and diplomatic institutions were targeted in Istanbul at the exact time that President Bush was in the U.K. Bruguiere also mentioned his ongoing concern with the Caucasus and Chechnya. He believes that al-Qaida terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has an extensive network in the region. The Caucasus, said Bruguiere, are only "a three-hour flight to Paris." In order to combat this mosaic of threats, Bruguiere said European countries needed to undertake two key actions: further sensitize their populations and strengthen the crackdown on informal financial networks, especially neighborhood storefronts and Pakistani-origin hawalas.

5. (S) Bruguiere also cited Asia as a particular area of concern. He and Ricard had discovered a Japan-based network after arresting and interrogating French citizen and longtime Japanese resident Lionel Dumont. Bruguiere said he believed terrorism in Asia would target financial centers. He was particularly concerned by the Pakistani-based terrorist organization Lashkar-i-Tayyiba.

DOMESTIC INVESTIGATIONS

6. (S) Bruguiere and Ricard's investigation into French nationals going to fight in Iraq (reftel) led to several arrests in the morning of January 24, Bruguiere said (additional reporting septel). He said their investigation had found juveniles as young as 13 trying to reach Iraq. Their investigation had not revealed formal recruitment networks, said Bruguiere, but rather a number of autonomous attempts to go on jihad to Iraq. The most common route for those trying to reach Iraq was through Syria and its many

madrasas and other prayer centers. He noted that the conflict in Iraq has emerged as a powerful recruitment tool for terrorism.

17. (S) Responding to a question regarding false documents, Bruguere said that the market for French passports was quite strong, but that French police were increasingly able to detect false papers when they came across them. Passports from Maghreb countries were also in demand, said Bruguere, because holders of such passports were given visa-free entry rights to Middle East countries, especially Syria. Bruguere said he remained confident regarding the ongoing trial of Djamel Beghal and four of Beghal's associates. (The "Beghal network" is accused of plotting to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Paris.) Bruguere said he had heard from prosecutorial sources that Beghal's defense was not going well.

18. (C) Bruguere praised U.S.-French counter-terrorism cooperation, and said he looked forward to continuing the strong relationship his office had with USG interlocutors. Leach